

SELF-REPORTED TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS IN EARLY-YEAR EDUCATION WITHIN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

There has been a significant rise in the number of children suffering from Neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) in recent years, implying the need for an educational system that is inclusive, supportive, and responsive. With impairments from NDDs, meaning those affected are likely to have needs that require support if they were to achieve life goals, including those touching on their education, little is known on the extent to which teachers within mainstream schools are equipped to support such children. This study sought to investigate teachers' self-reported efficacy in supporting children with NDDs who find themselves in mainstream schools in the context of Kiambu County, Kenya. A cross-sectional descriptive research design was adopted, targeting a sample size of 348 teachers of learners in PP1, PP2, Grade 1, Grade 2, and Grade 3 drawn from both public and private schools across the 12 sub-counties of Kiambu County. Quantitative data was collected using a structured questionnaire that utilized the 12-item Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES). Qualitative data was gathered through two focus group discussions (FGDs) with 12 teachers interviewed, six from public schools and six from private schools. A total of 311 teachers completed the questionnaires, which translates to a response rate of 89%. The majority of teachers were fairly confident in their ability to engage, instruct, and manage classrooms having learners with NDDs. The study identified significant challenges faced by teachers in supporting children with NDDs including; a lack of specialized training and resources. The study concludes that despite some prevalence of NDDs in mainstream schools, teachers lack adequate training and face significant challenges in supporting children with NDDs. The study recommends; that policymakers within the education sector, school administrators, and parents collaborate to provide regular teacher training, promote parental involvement through structured engagements.

Keywords: *Neurodevelopmental Disorders, Self-Efficacy, Early-Year Education, Inclusive Education, Teacher Training & Special Needs Education*

1. Background

Neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) are conditions that primarily affect the neurological development of the brain and frequently occur during early childhood (Reichard & Zimmer-Bensch, 2021). According to Banu et al., (2022), NDDs are defined by developmental defects that affect personal, social, intellectual, or vocational functioning. NDDs comprise a range of ailments, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), intellectual disability (ID), autism spectrum disorders (ASD), movement impairments such as tic disorder, among others. Children suffering from NDDs are present in mainstream classrooms, where affected students often face behavioral and learning challenges, which are further intensified by the ongoing assessments typical of regular education systems (Huber & Helm, 2020). Teachers are instrumental in offering education and care for all children, including those with NDDs, and therefore their efficacy in doing this is thus critical.

While inclusive education promotes the integration of learners with NDDs into regular schools, the unique characteristics of various NDDs present significant challenges in these settings. For example, behaviors commonly associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)—such as frequent screaming, singing, or repetitive utterances—highlight the need for more attentive and adaptive teaching strategies (Griffin, 2018). Supporting this view, Barua et al. (2022) note that many children with NDDs tend to stand out or feel out of place in typical classrooms, making it particularly difficult and demanding for teachers and peers to address their specific needs effectively. Unfortunately, evidence indicates that teachers, particularly those in the early year level of education, often feel inadequately prepared to interact with students with NDDs (Rhodes, 2022). Many reasons have been blamed on this, with the inadequacy of effective training programs designed to equip teachers with the requisite knowledge and skills to support children with NDDs listed as one of the challenges. Comprehensive teacher training has been observed to enhance the educational outcomes of children with NDDs (Ruble & McGrew, 2013). Such training includes instruction on understanding and recognizing NDDs, classroom adaptation techniques, behavior management strategies, and communication skills. Equipped with these skills, teachers can foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all children (Odom et al., 2021).

Globally, teacher training's impact on managing and identifying child mental health problems has been demonstrated. For instance, in Pakistan, school-based interventions involving teacher training programs have been reported to improve teachers' abilities in this regard (Imran et al., 2022). In England, Herwegen et al. (2019) highlighted a disconnect between professionals' understanding of conditions like Williams Syndrome, Down Syndrome, and ASD and their ability to offer effective, evidence-based support. Despite varied levels of expertise among professionals like teachers and therapists, there was inconsistency in recognizing less common challenges and a lack of alignment between perceived needs and interventions. Similarly, in southern India, Devi and Ganguly (2022) found that most educators lacked formal training in ASD from universities, relying instead on brief workshops. The lack of association between the type of training received and the use of evidence-based strategies emphasizes the need for comprehensive, research-informed teacher preparation programs.

Teacher self-efficacy is a recurring theme across these studies, influencing the quality of support children with NDDs receive. In Croatia, Nataša et al. (2021) found that self-efficacy among teachers was influenced more by perceived understanding of students than by external classroom

or personal teacher factors. In the U.S., Ruble et al. (2018) demonstrated that structured interventions like COMPASS significantly enhanced teacher capacity to address ASD-specific learning goals. In Canada, Dymond and Cooper (2019) highlighted the need for more consistent and individualized professional development to boost confidence and adaptability in teaching students with level 1 ASD. Finally, Leonard and Smyth (2022) reported generally neutral or negative teacher attitudes toward inclusive education for students with ASD, suggesting that demographic and training factors alone may be insufficient to shape positive inclusion practices without systemic, sustained efforts.

In South Africa, Van der Merwe et al. (2020) showed that newly trained teachers employed general strategies such as peer learning and visual aids to support students with NDDs in mainstream classrooms. While effective to a degree, these methods often lacked the specialization necessary for complex learning needs, calling attention to the need for more targeted training. Challenges identified in India and Pakistan similarly centered on insufficient materials, limited training, and behavioral management struggles, especially with students with ASD and ADHD (Hashir, 2021; Zikra et al., 2019). Structural issues, such as poor infrastructure in Tanzanian schools (Mgimba et al., 2022) and financial constraints in Kenya (Chesaro, 2020), further complicate the ability of teachers to adequately support learners, with calls for increased parental involvement, policy support, and teacher empowerment becoming increasingly apparent. Limited studies on teachers' self-efficacy in supporting children with neurodevelopmental disorders have been done in Kenya and Africa in general in recent years. The current study aimed to fill this gap by investigating self-reported teachers' self-efficacy in supporting children with neurodevelopmental disorders in early-year education within Kiambu County, Kenya.

2. Statement of the Problem

The rising global prevalence of NDDs has brought renewed attention to the capacity of educational systems to support affected children, particularly in early education settings (Maenner et al., 2020; Banu et al., 2022). Teachers are often the first point of structured engagement for children with NDDs, placing them in a pivotal position to recognize, support, and foster inclusive learning (Herwegen et al., 2019). However, studies reveal that many early-year educators globally and in Africa report limited preparedness, inadequate training, and low confidence in working with learners with NDDs (Rhodes, 2022). In Kenya, there are gaps in recent studies assessing teachers' perceived ability and actual challenges in managing learners with NDDs at the foundational education level. Although research indicates that teacher training significantly improves the support given to such children (Mugo et al., 2023), little is known about how early-year teachers in Kiambu County report their efficacy in dealing with this population. This gap in understanding self-efficacy limits the formulation of targeted professional development and inclusive policy interventions. Therefore, this study sought to address this gap by investigating early-year teachers' self-reported efficacy in supporting children with neurodevelopmental disorders within mainstream education settings in Kiambu County, Kenya.

3. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design with the study population comprising of teachers responsible for early-year education, defined in line with Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD, 2017) guidelines to include those teaching PP1, PP2, Grade 1, Grade 2, and Grade 3. A sample size of 384 teachers was determined using Fisher's formula,

allowing for representation while maintaining statistical reliability. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed. Schools were first stratified by type (public and private) and then by geographical setting (urban and rural). Simple random sampling was applied within each stratum to select schools, after which teachers were purposively selected based on their engagement in early-year education. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire comprising both standardized and custom-designed tools. The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) was adapted to assess teachers' confidence in student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management specifically for learners with NDDs. Qualitative data was gathered through two focus group discussions (FGDs) with 12 teachers interviewed, six from public schools and six from private schools where their experiences in supporting learners with NDDs within class settings, perceived challenges, and training needs were explored. Thematic analysis was applied to qualitative responses, while quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 23. Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and percentages were used to summarize demographic characteristics and TSES scores. Inferential statistics, including t-tests were used to assess relationships between self-efficacy and demographic variables such as gender, age, training, and teaching experience. Ethical approvals were obtained from NACOSTI and Kiambu County Department of Education with informed consent obtained from all participants and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.

4. Results

Sociodemographic Charactering of Participants

The majority of the participants were female, comprising 84% (261) of the total sample, while male teachers represented 16% (50). This gender disparity aligns with prevailing trends in early childhood education, where the teaching workforce is predominantly female. Given that this distribution reflects the typical demographic composition of teachers at the early-year education level, it does not compromise the validity of the study's findings. Furthermore, the study's focus was on overarching themes relevant to all participants, irrespective of gender, rather than on gender-specific variables. In terms of age distribution, the largest proportion of participants fell within the 45–54 years' age group, accounting for 39% (121), followed by those aged 25–34 years at 33% (102), and 35–44 years at 27% (84). Only 1% (4) were aged over 55 years. This combination of both experienced and relatively younger teachers suggests a potential balance between traditional pedagogical approaches and more contemporary, innovative methods within early childhood classrooms.

Regarding academic qualifications, nearly half of the participants (49%, 153) held a P1 Diploma, while 34% (107) possessed an Early Childhood Development (ECD) Certificate. Those with undergraduate degrees constituted 16% (51) of the sample. These findings indicate that the majority of participants had the requisite qualifications for teaching at the early childhood level. However, the relatively lower number of degree holders may point to a need for enhanced access to higher education and ongoing professional development opportunities in the sector. With respect to teaching experience, 35% (109) of the participants had been teaching at the early-year education level for 11–15 years, followed by 24% (75) with 5–10 years of experience, and 19% (60) with more than 20 years of experience. Participants with 16–20 years and less than 5 years of experience constituted 12% (36) and 10% (31), respectively. The high representation of teachers with over a decade of experience reflects a stable and seasoned workforce, which may contribute positively to

classroom management, child development understanding, and the ability to support learners with diverse educational needs, including those with neurodevelopmental disorders.

A significant proportion of the participants (89%, 278) were teaching in public schools, while 11% (33) were from private institutions. This distribution mirrors the dominance of public schools in Kiambu County's education system. Variations in institutional resources, policies, and support structures between public and private schools could influence how teachers experience and respond to the needs of learners with neurodevelopmental challenges. In terms of school location, most participants (82%, 255) indicated that their schools were situated in semi-urban areas. Rural schools accounted for 10% (32) of the sample, and urban schools made up 8% (24). This distribution likely reflects the geographic spread of educational institutions within Kiambu County. This is illustrated in table 1

Table 1: Sociodemographic Information of the Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	50	16%
	Female	261	84%
	Total	311	100%
Age Bracket	25 - 34 years	102	33%
	35 - 44 years	84	27%
	45 - 54 years	121	39%
	Above 55 years	4	1%
	Total	311	100%
Highest Level of Education	ECD Certificate	107	34%
	P1 Diploma	153	49%
	Undergraduate	51	16%
	Total	311	100%
Teaching Experience at Current Level	Below 5 years	31	10%
	5 - 10 years	75	24%
	11 - 15 years	109	35%
	16 - 20 years	36	12%
	Above 20 years	60	19%
	Total	311	100%
Type of School	Private school	33	11%
	Public school	278	89%
	Total	311	100%
School Location	Urban	24	8%
	Semi-Urban	255	82%
	Rural	32	10%
	Total	311	100%

Teachers' Self-Efficacy in Supporting Learners with Neurodevelopmental Disorders

Teachers were asked to indicate their level of comfort in supporting learners with NDDs on various tasks using the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES). The TSES measures teachers' self-efficacy in three domains: student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. The scale ranges from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating greater self-efficacy. Table 2 summarizes the findings.

Table 2: Teachers' Overall Sense of Efficacy scores

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	Chi-squares	P-value
Student engagement	14%	14%	13%	14%	13%	14%	17%	4.070	7.759	0.021
Instructional tactics	13%	15%	13%	15%	13%	13%	18%	4.108	9.244	0.133
Classroom management	12%	14%	13%	13%	15%	15%	18%	4.240	11.293	0.080

The mean score for student engagement was 4.070 on the 7-point scale, indicating that the majority of participants felt moderately able to engage students with NDDs within their classrooms. The responses were distributed across the different categories, with 17% of teachers feeling highly capable of handling this task. The chi-square value of 7.759 and a p-value of 0.021 suggest a statistically significant variation in teachers' ability to engage students with NDDs. In terms of instructional strategies, the mean score was 4.108 on the 7-point scale, indicating that most teachers felt moderately able to provide appropriate instructional tactics to learners with NDDs. The responses were distributed across the different categories, with 18% of teachers feeling highly capable of handling this task.

The chi-square value of 9.244 and a p-value of 0.133 indicate a lack of statistical significance in the variation, suggesting that while teachers are moderately confident in their instructional abilities, there may be inconsistencies in the application of these strategies across different settings. Classroom management had the highest mean score of 4.240 on the 7-point scale, indicating that the majority of participants felt moderately able to manage classrooms with learners with NDDs. Responses were distributed across the different categories, with 18% of teachers feeling highly capable of handling this task. With a p-value of 0.080 and a chi-square value of 11.293, the data approach statistical significance and point to a trend of considerable variance in teachers' perceived competence in managing classrooms with learners with NDDs.

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy and Sociodemographic Characteristics

The study examined the relationship between the overall Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) score and different teacher sociodemographic characteristics. With regards to gender, male teachers (N=50), 23 (46.0%) reported being excellently able to influence learners with NDDs on one or more of the tasks in the TSES, indicating a high sense of self-efficacy. The mean score for male teachers was 5.8, which is above the threshold of 4, suggesting a high sense of self-efficacy

overall. Similarly, for female teachers (N=261), 179 (68.6%) reported being excellently able to influence learners with NDDs, indicating a high sense of self-efficacy. The mean score for female teachers was 6.2, which is also above the threshold of 4, suggesting a high sense of self-efficacy overall. The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 7.842$, $p = 0.250$) indicated no significant association between gender and teachers' sense of efficacy. This suggests that both male and female teachers in this study have a high sense of self-efficacy in supporting learners with NDDs, and gender does not significantly influence their perceived ability to handle tasks related to student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. This is illustrated in table 3

Table 3: Relationship between TSES and Gender of Teachers

Gender	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean Score	Chi-square	p-value
Male	1 (2.0%)	2 (4.0%)	3 (6.0%)	5 (10.0%)	7 (14.0%)	9 (18.0%)	23 (46.0%)	5.8	7.842	0.25
Female	5 (1.9%)	7 (2.7%)	10 (3.8%)	15 (5.7%)	20 (7.7%)	25 (9.6%)	179 (68.6%)	6.2		

With regards to age of teachers, most teachers across different age groups reported high levels of self-efficacy in supporting children with neurodevelopmental disorders. The mean scores for the 25-34 years (6.4), 35-44 years (6.0), and 45-54 years (6.3) age groups all indicate high self-efficacy, with the majority of teachers in these groups feeling "Excellently Able" to support children with neurodevelopmental disorders. The chi-square values and p-values for these three age groups (25-54 years) suggest no statistically significant relationship between age and teachers' sense of efficacy. This indicates that within this age range, teachers generally maintain high levels of self-efficacy regardless of their specific age group. It's worth noting that the above 55 years category showed a lower mean score (2.0). However, this group consisted of only four participants, which is too small a sample to draw meaningful conclusions or make generalizations about this age group's self-efficacy levels. Overall, the data suggests that teachers across most age groups in this study report high levels of self-efficacy in supporting children with neurodevelopmental disorders, with no significant differences observed between the 25-54-year age groups. This is illustrated in table 4

Table 4: Relationship between TSES and Age of Teachers

Age Group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean Score	Chi-square	P-value
25-34 years	1 (1.0%)	2 (2.0%)	3 (2.9%)	4 (3.9%)	8 (7.8%)	9 (8.8%)	75 (73.5%)	6.4	9.119	0.167
35-44 years	2 (2.4%)	3 (3.6%)	4 (4.8%)	5 (6.0%)	7 (8.3%)	8 (9.5%)	55 (65.5%)	6		
45-54 years	2 (1.7%)	3 (2.5%)	4 (3.3%)	6 (5.0%)	8 (6.7%)	9 (7.5%)	89 (73.6%)	6.3	7.386	0.134
Above 55 years	1 (25.0%)	1 (25.0%)	2 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2		

With regards to private and public schools, 51.5% of teachers in private schools reported feeling "Excellently Able" to support children with neurodevelopmental disorders, with a mean score of

5.6 indicating moderate to high self-efficacy. The chi-square value of 7.356 and p-value of 0.289 suggest no statistically significant relationship for private schools. Public school teachers demonstrated higher self-efficacy, with 66.5% feeling "Excellently Able" and a mean score of 6.3. The chi-square value of 9.864 and p-value of 0.224 again show no statistically significant relationship. Overall, there is no statistically significant difference in teachers' sense of efficacy based on the type of school (private or public) where they teach. Teachers in both private and public schools reported high levels of self-efficacy in supporting children with neurodevelopmental disorders. This suggests that teachers' confidence in their ability to support learners remains consistently high regardless of the type of school in which they work. This is summarized in table 5.

Table 5: Relationship between TSES and School Type

School Type	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean Score	Chi-square	p-value
Private School	1 (3.0%)	1 (3.0%)	2 (6.1%)	3 (9.1%)	4 (12.1%)	5 (15.2%)	17 (51.5%)	5.6	7.356	0.289
Public School	5 (1.8%)	8 (2.9%)	11 (4.0%)	17 (6.1%)	23 (8.3%)	29 (10.4%)	185 (66.5%)	6.3	9.864	0.224

Teachers' Training on Supporting Children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders

Participants were asked whether they had attended any special trainings or workshops to equip them with skills to support learners with neurodevelopmental disorders within classroom settings and these were their responses

Respondent 001: *"No formal trainings, the only training I attend on personal initiative."*

Respondent 005: *"I have not attended any formal training specifically focused on supporting learners with neurodevelopmental disorders."*

Respondent 008: *"I have attended a few workshops on inclusive education, but they were not specifically tailored to neurodevelopmental disorders."*

Respondent 011: *"I have participated in some general special education trainings, but they did not provide in-depth knowledge on neurodevelopmental disorders."*

Respondent 003: *"I have attended a workshop on autism spectrum disorder, which provided some strategies for supporting learners with ASD in the classroom."*

Respondent 007: *"I have participated in a training on attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and learned some techniques for managing ADHD symptoms in the classroom."*

On the effectiveness of trainings in helping teachers to be able to support learners with neurodevelopmental disorders, teachers who had attended one gave the following response;

Respondent 002: *"The trainings I have attended have provided some useful information, but I still feel ill-equipped to fully support these learners in my classroom."*

Respondent 009: *"The trainings have raised my awareness about neurodevelopmental disorders, but I need more practical strategies and resources to effectively support these students."*

Respondent 006: *"The effectiveness of the trainings varies depending on the quality of the content and the facilitators. Some trainings have been more helpful than others."*

Respondent 012: *"I think the trainings are a good starting point, but ongoing support and mentorship would be more beneficial in helping us effectively support learners with neurodevelopmental disorders."*

Respondent 004: *"Majority of the teachers are willing to learn and support learners with neurodevelopmental disorders to the best of their abilities."*

Respondent 010: *"We need more comprehensive and accessible training programs to equip us with the necessary skills and knowledge to support these learners effectively."*

Challenges in Supporting Children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders

Participants were asked about the challenges they face while supporting learners with NDDs within the classroom setting and their recommendations for improving the level of support provided and these were their response;

Respondent 002: *"One of the major challenges we face is the unrealistic expectations of parents. They often expect their children with NDDs to perform at the same level as their typically developing peers, which puts a lot of pressure on both the teachers and the students."*

Respondent 005: *"Many parents tend to blame teachers for their children's failure, rather than understanding the unique challenges that come with supporting learners with NDDs. This can be very demotivating for teachers who are doing their best to accommodate these students' needs."*

Respondent 009: *"Supporting children with NDDs is extremely demanding for teachers. We have to go the extra mile to adapt our teaching methods, materials, and assessments to cater to their specific needs, which can be time-consuming and emotionally taxing."*

Respondent 011: *"Children with NDDs often disrupt the entire class, which can make it difficult for teachers to manage the classroom and ensure that all students' learning needs are met. This can be particularly challenging when there are multiple students with NDDs in the same class."*

Respondent 007: *"One of the biggest hurdles we face is the lack of family participation and involvement in the education of their children with NDDs. Most families are not willing to come to school and work collaboratively with teachers to support their child's learning and development."*

Some of the recommendations listed for addressing challenges teachers face in supporting children with NDDs include;

Respondent 001: *"I strongly believe that more comprehensive teacher training programs focusing on strategies for supporting learners with NDDs would greatly improve our ability to meet these students' needs. We need practical, evidence-based approaches that we can implement in our classrooms."*

Respondent 004: *"I think that families of children with severe NDDs should consider hiring teacher aides to provide additional support within the classroom. This would help alleviate some of the burden on teachers and ensure that these students receive the individualized attention they need."*

Respondent 006: *"Providing extra payment or incentives for teachers who work with students with NDDs could help motivate and compensate them for the additional time and effort they put into supporting these learners. This could also attract more teachers to specialize in this area."*

Respondent 010: *"Regular workshops and professional development opportunities for teachers, focusing on the latest research and best practices in supporting learners with NDDs, would be incredibly beneficial. These sessions could also provide a platform for teachers to share their experiences and learn from one another."*

Respondent 012: *"I believe that schools should invest in resources and materials specifically designed for students with NDDs, such as visual aids, sensory tools, and adaptive technology. Having access to these resources would make it easier for teachers to create inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of all students."*

5. Discussion

Majority of Kiambu County teachers reported high self-efficacy in engaging, instructing, and managing classrooms with NDD students, as measured by the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale. This finding contradicts some international studies, such as Anglim et al. (2017), which found that many teachers, regardless of age, were anxious and lacked confidence when anticipating teaching a student with ASD. In addition, the study found no statistically significant differences in teachers' self-efficacy across socio-demographic factors such as gender, age, education level, teaching experience, school type, or school location. This finding is partially consistent with the findings of Leonard and Smyth (2022), who found that gender, years of teaching experience, and type of training in Special Educational Needs (SEN) did not significantly affect attitudes toward inclusion. Nataša et al. (2021) found that students' self-efficacy was influenced by classroom time and teachers' understanding of them. The study also found that teachers in Kiambu County reported consistently high self-efficacy across all school types and locations. This contrasts with the findings of Cappe et al. (2021), who identified differences in self-efficacy, stress levels, and

burnout among teachers in various educational systems and cultural environments. Lastly, the broader focus on NDDs in this study, as opposed to the specific focus on autism in Cappe et al. (2021) research, could have contributed to the disparities in results.

The study found that the lack of comprehensive training programs in Kiambu County. This situation mirrors the findings of Able et al. (2015) who reported that while many teacher preparation programs include coursework on special education, specific training on NDDs like autism is often limited. In the United Kingdom, Jordan et al., (2019) found that despite policy initiatives promoting inclusive education, many teachers still felt underprepared to support students with NDDs effectively. The study also revealed that regardless of geographical location, teachers consistently express a desire for more practical, hands-on training and ongoing support. This global trend is evident in the findings of Dymond and Cooper (2019) in the United States, who reported that teachers envisioned more tailored ASD-focused training and collaboration opportunities to fulfill their professional needs. Similarly, in Europe, Cappe et al. (2017) found that French teachers expressed a strong need for additional training and support in working with students with autism.

The study identified several significant challenges faced by teachers in supporting children with neurodevelopmental disorders in early year education within Kiambu County. The primary challenges included unrealistic parental expectations, lack of family involvement, difficulties in adapting teaching methods, and managing classroom disruptions. These findings align closely with those of Zikra et al. (2019) in their study that found that teachers handling learners with NDDs faced challenges related to inadequate training, limited teaching materials, and difficulties in managing unique behavioral challenges, particularly for learners with ADHD during group activities. The study also established that unrealistic parental expectations and lack of family involvement were significant obstacles for teachers. This finding resonates with the research of Hashir (2021) in India, which identified unrealistic expectations from parents as major challenges faced by teachers. In addition, the study found that the demanding nature of adapting teaching methods for learners with NDDs and managing classroom disruptions led to increased stress among teachers. This aligns with the findings of Obiweleozo et al. (2021), who reported on stress levels among teachers of children with neurodevelopmental disorders.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that early-year teachers in Kiambu County generally have a high levels of self-efficacy in supporting learners with NDDs within their classroom setting. While classroom management showed the highest self-efficacy scores, there was no statistically significant variation on self-efficacy scores on student engagement, and instructional strategies, suggesting across individual teachers. Importantly, sociodemographic factors did not significantly influence teachers' sense of efficacy. Despite the generally positive self-perceptions, a critical gap was evident in teacher training. Many participants had either not received formal training on supporting learners with NDDs or found existing programs to be insufficient in offering practical, context-relevant strategies. Teachers expressed a strong willingness to support learners with NDDs but emphasized the need for structured, comprehensive training, ongoing mentorship, and access to specialized resources. Additional challenges included unrealistic expectations from parents, minimal family involvement, increased classroom management demands, and emotional

exhaustion. These findings highlight the need to equip teachers within mainstream schools with specialized skills as part of the investment in inclusive education.

7. Recommendation

1. Mandate NDD-specific training in teacher education and ongoing teacher workshops on NDD support strategies among practicing teacher as part of professional development opportunities for teachers on best practices in supporting learners with NDDs.
2. Allocate funds for NDD-focused teaching materials, including learning aids, specialized personnel, and referral systems, to ensure learners with NDDs receive appropriate interventions.
3. Develop and implement training programs for parents of children with NDDs to enhance family support and strengthen home-school collaboration through coordinated efforts

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